

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHRH #6668/01 2340658
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 220658Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0839
INFO RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 0887
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH 7591

S E C R E T RIYADH 006668

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/21/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KISL](#) [SA](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: 170 SAUDI AND MUSLIM SCHOLARS WORLDWIDE CALL FOR
UNITY OF ISLAMIC NATION

REF: A. A) RIYADH 6153
[B. B\) RIYADH 6101](#)
[C. C\) RIYADH 5876](#)
[D. D\) RIYADH 5832](#)
[E. E\) RIYADH 5709](#)
[F. F\) RIYADH 6343](#)

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Michael Gfoeller
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1. \(S\) SUMMARY:](#) 170 Muslim scholars from more than seventeen countries, including twenty-nine Saudi citizens, issued an open statement on August 4 entitled "Statement and Appeal from Scholars of the Islamic Nation." The statement condemned Israeli "aggression" in Lebanon and Palestine, and criticized the U.S. for supporting Israel. The authors appealed to Muslim and Arab people worldwide, leaders of Islamic nations, the international community, and people of the free world to boycott Israel both politically and economically and to follow paths of patience, peace, and unity to seek justice from Israel's actions in Lebanon and Palestine. The statement follows on the heels of several open statements and editorials harshly criticizing the U.S.'s reaction to the Lebanon crisis. It reflects the increasing discontent among the Saudi public with the U.S., and at the same time, it stands out as a call for peace and condemnation of all forms of extremism, unlike most open statements by religious conservatives from the Kingdom (Ref A, B, C, D, E).
END SUMMARY.

[2. \(U\)](#) The Saudi religious conservative website "Islam Online" published an open statement on August 4 that called upon world leaders and the Muslim and Arab peoples to unite against Israeli aggression in Lebanon and Palestine. The statement addressed five groups of people: (1) all Muslim and Arab people; (2) various sects of the Ummah; (3) governments of the Islamic and Arab states; (4) world people and governments; and (5) U.S. and Israel.

[3. \(U\)](#) In the first group, the scholars declared their solidarity with the Palestinians and Lebanese in their struggle and called upon all Muslim and Arab peoples to offer them "all material and moral support as far as possible and within the limits of Shari'a." The statement delineated the religious duty of supporting the Lebanese and Palestinian people during their current "subjugation." It further reminded them of their right of self-defense, citing the Holy Quran: "to those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight) because they are wronged, and verily God is most powerful for their aid." (Verse 39: Al-Hajj)

[4. \(U\)](#) The scholars called upon the various sects of the Ummah (Islamic Nation) to unify in the wake of aggression. They called upon the sects to "forsake all reasons of differences as the enemy is targeting every one of them without exception...In fact it is our duty to quell this fire

of sectarian discord before it spreads." The scholars provided additional Quranic verses to support their call for unity, including, "God likes those who fight in His cause in battle array as if they were a solid cemented structure." (Verse 46: Al-Anfal)

15. (U) The scholars also called upon the governments of Islamic and Arab states to "act piously" and abide by religion regarding the future of their people, in addition to engaging in peaceful resistance by boycotting Israel in all manners. They commented that the strength of Islamic and Arab states lies in their devotion to religion and urged them to unify based upon shared religious values in order to stop American and Zionist "hegemony." They further called all governments to "disengage from any political and economical relations with the Israeli enemy, whether these relations are declared or undeclared. We call them to get rid of any illusions of peace, as this has only bred death, destruction, shame, disputes, and subordination."

16. (U) The scholars called on world leaders to recognize that Muslim nations stand "shoulder to shoulder with all peace-loving people," and stated that world leaders must condemn the "aggression perpetrated by Israel and the U.S." They issued a stern warning that Israel and the U.S. are "ruled by groupings of extremists who harbor hatred to all religions and cultures and nationalities, and we reaffirm that unless these powers are reigned in, mankind will witness days much worse than it witnessed in the days of the Mongol Tatars and Nazis and the like."

17. (C) The scholars then directly addressed the U.S. and Israel. Switching tone from the previous paragraph, they questioned the actions of the U.S. and Israel from both a historical and present-day perspective. They talked of the

need for patience, claiming that patience will bring the Muslims victory. They reaffirmed their desire to work with all peoples, stating that "we are not advocates of wars, sedition or racism. However, we hate humiliation and surrender to the powers of injustice and tyranny. We address the wise Jews in the world, as well as the free and wise Americans, and say to them: reign in your mad rulers and do not let them ruin the future of humanity out of religious superstitions or for financial or political interests." They closed with assurances of peace, faith and justice, and questioned: "Will you listen to us before it is too late?"

18. (C) The statement was signed by 170 Muslim scholars from nineteen countries, including 29 Saudi signatories. The Saudi signatories included scholars from both the Sunni and Shi'a sects, and they hailed from various parts of the Kingdom. Interestingly, four of the 29 Saudi signatories are professors at King Khaled University, where Dr. Sa'ad al-Musa currently teaches-- the journalist and professor who published an open letter to President Bush condemning U.S. policies on the Lebanese and Palestinian crises (Ref F). Other signatories included citizens from Lebanon, Jordan, Bosnia, Chad, Macedonia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Indonesia, Senegal, Morocco, Eritrea, Pakistan, Yemen, Tunisia, and Egypt.

19. (C) COMMENT: Part of the significance of this statement lies in its broad range of signatories, call for peace and unity, and condemnation of all forms of extremism. On the one hand, it calls both Muslims and non-Muslims alike to oppose what the authors perceive as unjust aggression by Israel, and, by virtue of its support, the U.S. It encourages this opposition through the strength of unity and religion, not violence. On the other hand, there is also an underlying current of despair in the statement. The message frankly dismisses the peace process with its call for disengagement from the Israeli enemy and denunciation of the "illusions of peace." These two conflicting sides of the statement aptly reflect the rather divided attitude of much of the Saudi intelligentsia and populace to the Lebanese and Palestinian crises. END COMMENT.
OBERWETTER